

# OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing data collected from **LAKE SKATUTAKEE, HARRSVILLE**, the program coordinators have made the following observations and recommendations:

We would like to congratulate your group on sampling the deep spot twice and the tributaries three times this season! However, we would like to continue to encourage your group to conduct more sampling events in the future. Typically we recommend that monitoring groups sample the deep spot at three times per summer (once in **June, July, and August**). We understand that the number of sampling events you decide to conduct per summer will depend upon volunteer availability, and your monitoring group's water monitoring goals and funding availability. However, with a limited amount of data it is difficult to determine accurate and representative water quality trends. Since weather patterns and activity in the watershed can change throughout the summer, from year to year, and even from hour to hour during a rain event, it is a good idea to sample the lake/pond at least once per month over the course of the season.

If you are having difficulty finding volunteers to help sample, or to pick-up or drop-off equipment at one of the laboratories, please give the VLAP Coordinator a call and we will try to help you work out an arrangement.

## **FIGURE INTERPRETATION**

- **Figure 1 and Table 1:** The graphs in Figure 1 (Appendix A) show the historical and current year chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column. Table 1 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum, and mean concentration for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

Chlorophyll-a, a pigment found in plants, is an indicator of the algal abundance. Because algae are usually microscopic plants that contain chlorophyll-a, and are naturally found in lake ecosystems, the chlorophyll-a concentration measured in the water gives an

estimation of the algal concentration or lake productivity. **The mean (average) summer chlorophyll-a concentration for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 7.02 mg/m<sup>3</sup>.**

The current year data (the top graph) show that the chlorophyll-a concentration **decreased by a large amount** from **June** to **August**.

The historical data (the bottom graph) show that the 2004 chlorophyll-a mean is **slightly less than** the state mean and is the **second-highest** annual mean since monitoring began in **1989**.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows a **slightly variable** in-lake chlorophyll-a trend since monitoring began. Specifically, the mean concentration has **fluctuated between approximately 2.9 and 6.7 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** since **1989**.

In the 2005 annual report, since your group will have sampled the chlorophyll-a concentration at the deep spot for at least 10 consecutive years, we will conduct a statistical analysis of the historic data to determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean since monitoring began.

While algae are naturally present in all lakes/ponds, an excessive or increasing amount of any type is not welcomed. In freshwater lakes/ponds, phosphorus is the nutrient that algae depend upon for growth. Algal concentrations may increase with an increase in nonpoint sources of phosphorus loading from the watershed, or in-lake sources of phosphorus loading (such as phosphorus releases from the sediments). Therefore, it is extremely important for volunteer monitors to continually educate residents about how activities within the watershed can affect phosphorus loading and lake/pond quality.

- **Figure 2 and Table 3:** The graphs in Figure 2 (Appendix A) show historical and current year data for lake/pond transparency. Table 3 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum and mean transparency data for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

Volunteer monitors use the Secchi-disk, a 20 cm disk with alternating black and white quadrants, to measure water clarity (how far a person can see into the water). Transparency, a measure of water clarity, can be affected by the amount of algae and sediment from erosion, as well as the natural colors of the water. **The mean**

**(average) summer transparency for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 3.7 meters.**

The current year data (the top graph) show that the in-lake transparency **remained stable** from **June** to **August**. The transparency on **both sampling events** was **slightly less than** the state mean.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows a **slightly increasing (meaning slightly improving)** transparency trend since monitoring began in 1989.

As previously discussed, since your group will have sampled the transparency at the deep spot for at least 10 consecutive years, the 2005 annual report will include a statistical analysis of the historic data to determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean since monitoring began.

Typically, high intensity rainfall causes erosion of sediments into lakes/ponds and streams, thus decreasing clarity. Efforts should continually be made to stabilize stream banks, lake/pond shorelines, disturbed soils within the watershed, and especially dirt roads located immediately adjacent to the edge of tributaries and the lake/pond. Guides to Best Management Practices designed to reduce, and possibly even eliminate, nonpoint source pollutants, such as sediment loading, are available from DES upon request.

- **Figure 3 and Table 8:** The graphs in Figure 3 (Appendix A) show the amount of phosphorus in the epilimnion (the upper layer) and the hypolimnion (the lower layer); the inset graphs show current year data. Table 8 (Appendix B) lists the annual maximum, minimum, and median concentration for each deep spot layer and each tributary since the lake/pond has joined the program.

Phosphorus is the limiting nutrient for plant and algae growth in New Hampshire's freshwater lakes and ponds. Too much phosphorus in a lake/pond can lead to increases in plant and algal growth over time. **The median summer total phosphorus concentration in the epilimnion (upper layer) of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 12 ug/L. The median summer phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer) is 14 ug/L.**

The current year data for the epilimnion (the top inset graph) show that the phosphorus concentration **decreased very slightly** from **June** to **August**. The phosphorus concentration on **both sampling events** was **slightly less than** the state median.

The current year data for the hypolimnion (the bottom inset graph) show that the phosphorus concentration **remained stable** from **June** to **August**. The phosphorus concentration on **both sampling events** was **less than** the state median.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line for the epilimnion and hypolimnion shows a **variable** phosphorus trend. Specifically, the mean annual epilimnetic phosphorus concentration has **fluctuated between approximately 8 and 19 ug/L** and the mean annual hypolimnetic phosphorus concentration has **fluctuated between approximately 4 and 17 ug/L** since monitoring began.

One of the most important approaches to reducing phosphorus loading to a waterbody is to continually educate watershed residents about its sources and how excessive amounts can adversely impact the ecology and value of lakes and ponds. Phosphorus sources within a lake or pond's watershed typically include septic systems, animal waste, lawn fertilizer, road and construction erosion, and natural wetlands.

#### **TABLE INTERPRETATION**

➤ **Table 2: Phytoplankton**

Table 2 (Appendix B) lists the current and historical phytoplankton species observed in the lake/pond. Specifically, this table lists the three most dominant phytoplankton species observed in the sample and their relative abundance in the sample. In addition, this table has been enhanced this year to include the overall phytoplankton cell abundance rating of the sample. The overall phytoplankton cell abundance in a sample is calculated using a formula based on the relationship that DES biologists have observed over the years regarding phytoplankton concentrations, algal concentrations, and biological productivity in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds. A mathematical equation is used to classify the overall abundance of phytoplankton cells in a sample into the following categories: *sparse*, *scattered*, *moderate*, *common*, *abundant*, and *very abundant*. Generally, the more phytoplankton cells there are in a sample, the higher the chlorophyll concentration and the higher the biological productivity of the lake.

The dominant phytoplankton species observed in the **June** sample were ***Rhizosolenia* (diatom)**, ***Tabellaria* (diatom)**, and ***Dinobryon* (golden-brown)**.

The overall abundance of rating phytoplankton cells in the sample was calculated to be **very abundant**.

Phytoplankton populations undergo a natural succession during the growing season (Please refer to the “Biological Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation regarding seasonal plankton succession). Diatoms and golden-brown algae are typical in New Hampshire’s less productive lakes and ponds.

➤ **Table 2: Cyanobacteria**

A **small amount** of the cyanobacteria *Anabaena* and *Oscillatoria* were observed in the plankton sample this season. ***These species, if present in large amounts, can be toxic to livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans.*** (Please refer to the “Biological Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation regarding cyanobacteria).

Cyanobacteria can reach nuisance levels when phosphorus loading from the watershed to surface waters is increased (this is often caused by rain events) and favorable environmental conditions occur (such as a period of sunny, warm weather).

The presence of cyanobacteria serves as a reminder of the lake’s/pond’s delicate balance. Watershed residents should continue to act proactively to reduce nutrient loading to the lake/pond by eliminating fertilizer use on lawns, keeping the lake/pond shoreline natural, re-vegetating cleared areas within the watershed, and properly maintaining septic systems and roads.

In addition, residents should also observe the lake/pond in September and October during the time of fall turnover (lake mixing) to document any algal blooms that may occur. Cyanobacteria have the ability to regulate their depth in the water column by producing or releasing gas from vesicles. However, occasionally lake mixing can affect their buoyancy and cause them to rise to the surface and bloom. Wind and currents tend to “pile” cyanobacteria into scums that accumulate in one section of the lake/pond. If a fall bloom occurs, please collect a sample (any clean jar or bottle will be suitable) and contact the VLAP Coordinator.

➤ **Table 4: pH**

Table 4 (Appendix B) presents the in-lake and tributary current year and historical pH data.

pH is measured on a logarithmic scale of 0 (acidic) to 14 (basic). pH is important to the survival and reproduction of fish and other aquatic life. A pH below 6.0 limits the growth and reproduction of fish. A pH between 6.0 and 7.0 is ideal for fish. The mean pH value

for the epilimnion (upper layer) in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **6.6**, which indicates that the surface waters in the state are slightly acidic. For a more detailed explanation regarding pH, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The mean pH at the deep spot this season ranged from **6.23** in the hypolimnion to **6.32** in the epilimnion, which means that the water is **slightly acidic**.

It is important to point out that the pH in the hypolimnion (lower layer) was **lower (more acidic)** than in the epilimnion (upper layer). This increase in acidity near the lake bottom is likely due the decomposition of organic matter and the release of acidic by-products into the water column.

Due to the presence of granite bedrock in the state and acid deposition (from snowmelt, rainfall, and atmospheric particulates) in New Hampshire, there is not much that can be done to effectively increase lake/pond pH.

➤ **Table 5: Acid Neutralizing Capacity**

Table 5 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical epilimnetic ANC for each year the lake/pond has been monitored through VLAP.

Buffering capacity (ANC) describes the ability of a solution to resist changes in pH by neutralizing the acidic input. The mean ANC value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **6.6 mg/L**, which indicates that many lakes and ponds in the state are at least "moderately vulnerable" to acidic inputs. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The mean Acid Neutralizing Capacity (ANC) of the epilimnion (the upper layer) was **1.8 mg/L** this season, which is ***much less than*** the state mean. In addition, this indicates that the lake/pond is ***extremely vulnerable*** to acidic inputs (such as acid precipitation).

➤ **Table 6: Conductivity**

Table 6 (Appendix B) presents the current and historical conductivity values for tributaries and in-lake data. Conductivity is the numerical expression of the ability of water to carry an electric current (which is determined by the number of negatively charged ions from metals, salts, and minerals in the water column). The mean conductivity value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **59.4 uMhos/cm**. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring

Parameters” section of this report.

The mean annual conductivity in the epilimnion at the deep spot this season was **40.36 uMhos/cm**, which is **less than** the state mean.

The conductivity has **increased very gradually** in the lake/pond and inlets since monitoring began. Typically, sources of increased conductivity are due to human activity. These activities include septic systems, agricultural runoff, and road runoff (which contains road salt during the spring snow melt). New development in the watershed can alter runoff patterns and expose new soil and bedrock areas, which could contribute to increasing conductivity. In addition, natural sources, such as iron and manganese deposits in bedrock, can influence conductivity.

We recommend that your monitoring group conduct stream surveys and storm event sampling along the inlet(s) with **elevated** conductivity so that we can determine potential sources to the lake.

*For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event sampling and stream surveys, please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report “Special Topic Article” or contact the VLAP Coordinator.*

It is possible that de-icing materials applied to nearby roadways during the winter months may be influencing the conductivity in the lake/pond. In New Hampshire, the most commonly used de-icing material is salt (sodium chloride).

Therefore, we recommend that the **epilimnion** (upper layer) be sampled for chloride next season. We also recommend that your monitoring group sample the major inlets to lake/pond to determine the conductivity and chloride levels of the streamflow. This sampling may help us pinpoint what areas of the watershed are contributing to the increasing in-lake conductivity.

*Please note that there will be an additional cost for each of the chloride samples and that these samples must be analyzed at the DES laboratory in Concord. In addition, it is best to conduct chloride sampling in the spring soon after the snow has melted.*

*Also, please read this year’s Special Topic Article, “Conductivity is on the rise in New Hampshire’s Lakes and Ponds: What is causing the increase and what can be done?” which is found in Appendix D of this report. This article may help your association understand what types of activities can lead to elevated conductivity and chloride levels and what residents can do to minimize this type of pollution.*

➤ **Table 8: Total Phosphorus**

Table 8 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical total phosphorus data for in-lake and tributary stations. Phosphorus is the nutrient that limits the algae's ability to grow and reproduce. Please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The phosphorus concentration in the **inlets** was **relatively low** this season, which is good news. However, we recommend that your monitoring group sample the major tributaries to the lake/pond soon after snow-melt and periodically during rain storms to determine if the phosphorus concentration is **elevated** in the tributaries during these times. Typically, the majority of nutrient loading to a lake/pond occurs in the spring during snowmelt and during intense rain storms that cause surface runoff and erosion within the watershed.

*For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event sampling please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report "Special Topic Article" or contact the VLAP Coordinator.*

➤ **Table 9 and Table 10: Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data**

Table 9 (Appendix B) shows the dissolved oxygen/temperature profile(s) for the 2004 sampling season. Table 10 (Appendix B) shows the historical and current year dissolved oxygen concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer). The presence of dissolved oxygen is vital to fish and amphibians in the water column and also to bottom-dwelling organisms. Please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The dissolved oxygen concentration was **high** at all depths sampled at the deep spot of the lake/pond. Typically, shallow lakes and ponds that are not deep enough to stratify into more than one or two thermal layers will have relatively high amounts of oxygen at all depths. This is due to continual lake mixing and diffusion of oxygen into the bottom waters induced by wind and wave action.

➤ **Table 11: Turbidity**

Table 11 (Appendix B) lists the current year and historical data for in-lake and tributary turbidity. Turbidity in the water is caused by suspended matter, such as clay, silt, and algae. Water clarity is strongly influenced by turbidity. Please refer to the "Other Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.



The tributary and deep spot turbidity was **relatively low** this season which suggests that erosion may not be a major contributor of sediment and nutrient loading to the lake/pond. This is good news and we hope to see this trend continue.

➤ **Table 12: Bacteria (*E.coli*)**

Table 12 lists the current year and historical data for bacteria (*E.coli*) testing. (Please note that Table 12 now lists the maximum and minimum results for this season and for all past sampling seasons.) *E. coli* is a normal bacterium found in the large intestine of humans and other warm-blooded animals. *E.coli* is used as an indicator organism because it is easily cultured and its presence in the water, in defined amounts, indicates that sewage **MAY** be present. If sewage is present in the water, potentially harmful disease-causing organisms **MAY** also be present.

The *E.coli* concentration was **low** in the **Spring** this season (less than 5 counts per 100 mL) which is good news.

If residents are concerned about sources of bacteria such as failing septic systems, animal waste, or waterfowl waste, it is best to conduct *E. coli* testing when the water table is high and immediately after rain events.

➤ **Table 14: Current Year Biological and Chemical Raw Data**

This table is a new addition to the Annual Report. This table lists the most current sampling season results. Since the maximum, minimum, and annual mean values for each parameter are not shown on this table, this table displays the current year “raw” (meaning unprocessed) data. The results are sorted by station, depth zone (epilimnion, metalimnion, and hypolimnion) and parameter.

➤ **Table 15: Station Table**

This table is a new addition to the Annual Report. As of the Spring of 2004, all historical and current year VLAP data are included in the DES Environmental Monitoring Database (EMD). To facilitate the transfer of VLAP data into the EMD, a new station identification system had to be developed. While volunteer monitoring groups can still use the sampling station names that they have used in the past (and are most familiar with), an EMD station name also exists for each VLAP sampling location. For each station sampled at your lake or pond, Table 15 identifies what EMD station name corresponds to the station names you have used in the past and will continue to use in the future.

**DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL****Annual Assessment Audit:**

During the annual visit to your lake/pond, the biologist conducted a “Sampling Procedures Assessment Audit” for your monitoring group. Specifically, the biologist observed the performance of your monitoring group while sampling and filled out an assessment audit sheet to document the ability of the volunteer monitors to follow the proper field sampling procedures (as outlined in the VLAP Monitor’s Field Manual). This assessment is used to identify any aspects of sample collection in which volunteer monitors fail to follow proper procedures, and also provides an opportunity for the biologist to retrain the volunteer monitors as necessary. This will ultimately ensure that the samples that the volunteer monitors collect are truly representative of actual lake and tributary conditions.

Overall, your monitoring group did an **excellent** job collecting samples on the annual biologist visit this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the proper field sampling procedures and there was no need for the biologist to provide additional training. Keep up the good work!

**Sample Receipt Checklist:**

Each time your monitoring group dropped off samples at the laboratory this summer, the laboratory staff completed a sample receipt checklist to assess and document if the volunteer monitors followed proper sampling techniques when collecting the samples. The purpose of the sample receipt checklist is to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, future re-occurrences of improper sampling techniques.

Overall, the sample receipt checklist showed that your monitoring group did an **excellent** job when collecting samples and submitting them to the laboratory this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the proper field sampling procedures and there was no need for the laboratory staff to contact your group with questions, and no samples were rejected for analysis.

**USEFUL RESOURCES**

*Acid Deposition Impacting New Hampshire's Ecosystems*, NHDES Fact Sheet ARD-32, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/ard/ard-32.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/ard/ard-32.htm).

*Best Management Practices to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution: A Guide for Citizens and Town Officials*, NHDES Booklet WD-03-42, (603) 271-2975.

*Best Management Practices for Well Drilling Operations*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WSEB-21-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.nh.gov/factsheets/ws/ws-21-4.htm](http://www.des.nh.gov/factsheets/ws/ws-21-4.htm).

*Canada Geese Facts and Management Options*, NHDES Fact Sheet BB-53, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-53.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-53.htm).

*Cyanobacteria in New Hampshire Waters Potential Dangers of Blue-Green Algae Blooms*, NHDES Fact Sheet WMB-10, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm).

*Erosion Control for Construction in the Protected Shoreland Buffer Zone*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-SP-1, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-1.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-1.htm).

*Freshwater Jellyfish In New Hampshire*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-5, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-51/htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-51/htm).

*Impacts of Development Upon Stormwater Runoff*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WQE-7, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-7.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-7.htm).

*IPM: An Alternative to Pesticides*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-SP-3, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-3.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-3.htm).

*Iron Bacteria in Surface Water*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-18, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-18.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-18.htm).

*Lake Foam*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-5.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-5.htm).

*Lake Protection Tips: Some Do's and Don'ts for Maintaining Healthy Lakes*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-9, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-9.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-9.htm).

*Proper Lawn Care In the Protected Shoreland, The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-SP-2, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm).

*Road Salt and Water Quality*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WMB-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-4.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-4.htm).

*Sand Dumping - Beach Construction*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-15, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm).

*Shorelands Under the Jurisdiction of the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act*, NHDES Fact Sheet SP-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-4.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-4.htm).

*Soil Erosion and Sediment Control on Construction Sites*, NHDES Fact Sheet WQE-6, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-6.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-6.htm).

*Swimmers Itch*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-2, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-2.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-2.htm).

*Through the Looking Glass: A Field Guide to Aquatic Plants*, North American Lake Management Society, 1988, (608) 233-2836 or [www.nalms.org](http://www.nalms.org).

*Weed Watchers: An Association to Halt the Spread of Exotic Aquatic Plants*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-4.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-4.htm).